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NEWSLETTER OF THE LONDON CHAPTER,
ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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February 1999

99-2

There is no longer a Speaker's Night in May.

In future issues we will use this spot to announce ideas for summer activities, if any crop up. Does anyone have any ideas for summer fun? Picnics? Bus Trips? Are there any volunteer opportunities to do field work?

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EXECUTIVE REPORT

A motion was made and duly passed at the March meeting to cancel the May meetings because of poor attendance. From now on we will meet from September to April, except for December which is the annual Christmas party. If anyone has any suggestions for future speakers please let us know.

Chris Ellis wants it to be known that he selflessly flaunted copies of London Chapter publications at the Annual Meetings of the Society of American Archaeology held this April in Chicago. I am sure that all his hard work will pay off. Below is a list of the London Chapter publications that are still available:

Occasional Publication #2 1986 *Archaeological Consulting in Ontario, Papers of the London Conference* (13 Chapters: 130+pp, 20+ figures), William Fox, editor	$6.00
Occasional Publication #3 1997 *The Adder Orchard Site: Lithic Technology and Spatial Organization in the Broadpoint Late Archaic* (7 Chapters: 100+pp, 30+ figures), Jacqueline Fisher	$15.00
Occasional Publication #4 1996 *Deeds/Nations* (200+pp, 90+ figures), Greg Curnoe	$22.00
Occasional Publication #7 1998 *The Meyers Road Site: Archaeology of the Early to Middle Iroquoian Transition.* (6 Chapters, 210=pp, 75 figures) Ron Williamson, editor	$18.00

SOCIAL REPORT

Spring field season is upon us! Time to get burnt like a crispy critter and get dirt in unmentionable places. What fun!! There are at least five archaeological consulting firms with a presence in this neck of the woods. Anyone interested in field work should contact Neil Ferris, Vice-President of the London Chapter. In his other job as Regional Archaeologist he maintains an active list of consultants.

EDITORS' REPORT

This month's article is by Paul Lennox, Regional Archaeologist for the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. He documents discoveries by Vince Pilon, an avocational archaeologist, at what is believed to be a Late Archaic cache.

The Pilon Site,
A Late Archaic Cache Near Brantford, Ontario:
A Lesson In Site Visibility.

Paul A. Lennox

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological sites are sometimes deeply buried. We have all seen examples where deep excavations reveal buried cultural materials well below modern surfaces. This view of archaeology is one we usually see on the TV and in our textbooks and classrooms. The popular view of archaeology is that it is the study of something that is deeply buried. This view, however, is one that we rarely celebrate in the field. Such sites represent considerable work and sometimes because of the depth of excavations they can even raise safety concerns.

As a result of this popular view, people often ask, "How deep do you have to dig?" and are surprised when you indicate that you don't have to go too deep below the surface before you are through the cultural material and into "sterile subsoil". They rarely understand why you are happy with this state of affairs but gain an appreciation quickly at the end of a shovel on a hot summer day. Fortunately, in southern Ontario, archaeological sites are rarely deeply buried and most sites are visible in ploughed fields after cultivation has turned over the "living floors" of past occupations buried only a few centimetres and the rain has washed the soil from "the evidence".

In southern Ontario the remains of previous occupations are often visible on the surface of ploughed fields. With a trained eye these archaeological sites may be easy to identify. In fact, we assume this to be true and use it to our advantage, walking ploughed fields or ploughing previously cultivated acreage (hectareage?) to determine where sites are and are not. This technique is such a proven one that it is a preferred survey method in MCzCR's Archaeological Assessment Technical Guidelines, not to mention that ploughing is cheaper than digging shovel test pits. However, examples that suggest the assumption is false or that we overestimate the reliability of ploughed surfaces to reveal significant archaeological site locations do exist, and like "small sites" and "potential models" real life examples tell us to be careful about what we think we know. The Pilon site is such an example.

During the archaeological survey and the salvage excavation of sites to be impacted by the 403 Highway between Brantford and Ancaster we were fortunate to meet Mr. Vince Pilon who lives nearby. Aside from his welcome assistance in the field, he contributed substantially to our highway investigations with his long term knowledge and interest in the area, an appreciation he gained from years of walking around and wondering about the long history of occupation there. During several enjoyable meetings with Mr. Pilon he indicated a small site that he had collected on occasion over many years, and offered his accumulated collection from that site for study. I have called the site the Pilon Site to commemorate this significant contribution and the man who made it. While some comparative details of the collection are presented here and will be of use in advancing our understanding of Late Archaic-Early Woodland artifact caches, my intent here is primarily to think about site location and visibility as considered daily by the archaeological community.

THE PILON SITE AND IT'S COLLECTION

The Pilon site is located on Lot 16, Concession III, in Ancaster Township, Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, Ontario, about 50 metres south of the 403 Highway right-of-way and about 200 metres west of a now intermittent tributary of Big Creek. From here Big Creek flows south to join the Grand River (Figure 1). Mr. Pilon has collected the surface of this site, usually about twice a year, for the past 30 years. Harri Mattila and I joined Vince one day in November 1990, on a site visit to see where the site was located, to be assured that it was some distance beyond the proposed (now built) 403 Highway.

As we walked across the relatively featureless corn field, some distance from any watercourses or landmarks, we watched Vince locate himself and adjust his position according to a couple of pine trees several hundred metres to the south, some subtle, barely perceptible, contours (the site is on the south slope of a very slight ridge) and the fact that it was in an area of clay-loam, not in the large sandy area slightly to the northeast. Finally, Vince declared, "Here it is. This is the spot."

Now, most of us "seasoned veterans" can spot a likely site location or a "high potential" area from the windshield of our trucks - at 100 kilometres per hour - on a winter's night. Yet, as I stood next to Vince I looked at him to confirm what he was saying. "This is it?" I asked. The answer came quick, but, in his quiet voice, it sounded as if there was some hesitancy. "Yup" - and he started to look at the exposed surface of the ground. I joined him, doing circles around his location. Finding absolutely nothing, I widened my search. He corrected me once from about 20 metres away - "You are too far away - it is over here." The area, he insisted, was only about 10 metres in diameter.

We must have wandered around that small area, the three of us, for half an hour until we were looking at our footprints in the dirt. We found one scraper. Vince assured us that "this is it" and it was a typical day in the neighbourhood. Back at his house he pulled out a small box of artifacts he had collected there over the years in an area he referred to as Z-7, a mark I found consistent both on his areal photo and labelled neatly in ink on the artifacts - Bill Fox had been there before. Vince loaned me this part of his collection which I measured and photographed. Sorry it took me so long to complete my job and to say thanks to Vince.

The materials Vince collected from the site are, for the most part, made of a medium to-dark grey Onondaga chert with occasional light-brown mottling. The tools are predominantly triangular to ovate bifaces often referred to as cache blades. Similar tools are well documented elsewhere and are attributed to Late Archaic and Early Woodland caches: tools buried in clusters, sometimes associated with burials and sometimes thought to represent stored surplus (Ellis et al. 1990, Fox 1981, Granger 1978, Williamson 1980, 1988, Williamson and MacDonald 1997, Spence et al. 1990).

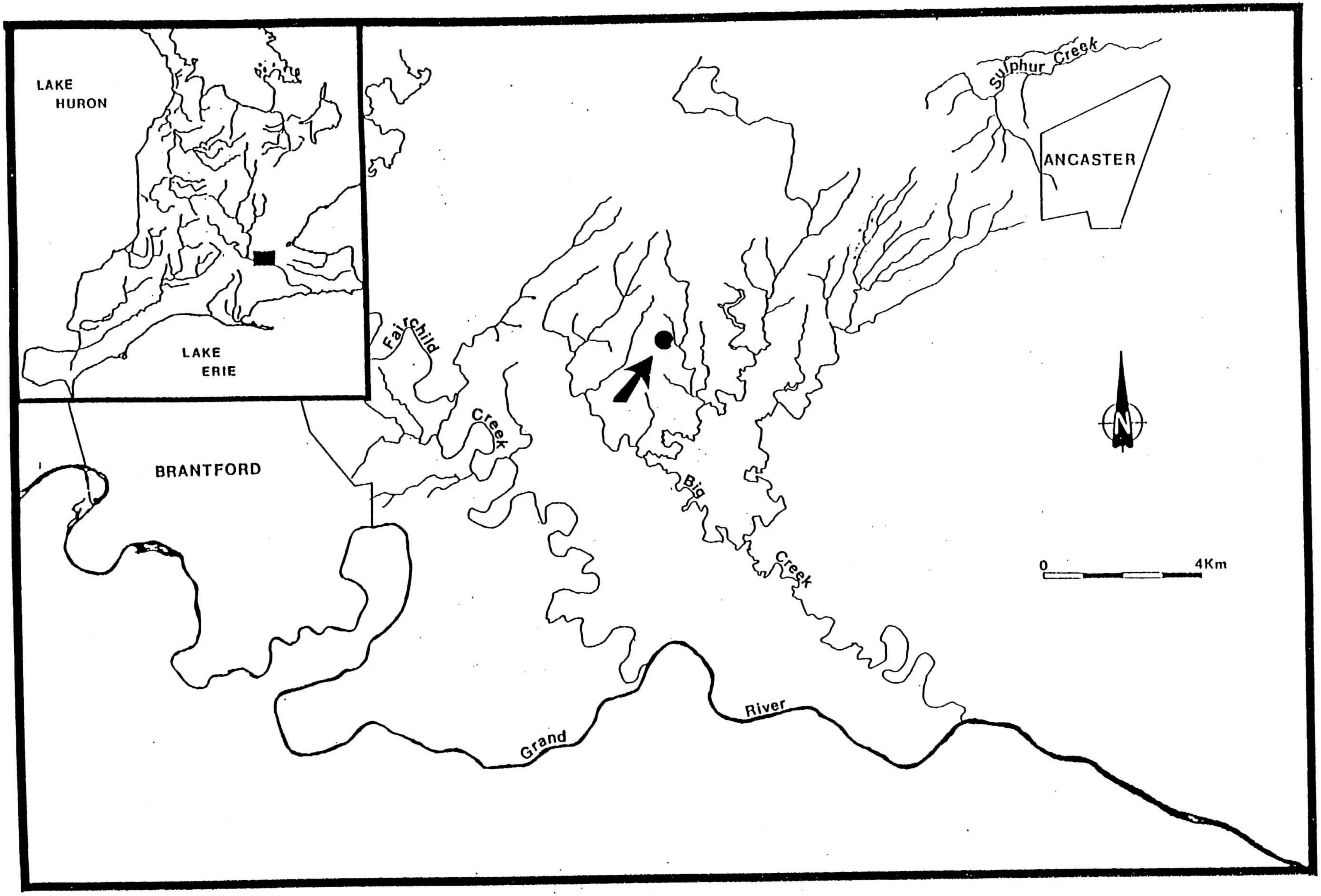

Figure 1. Location of the Pilon Site

CACHE OR CACHED "BLADES"

The classification of cache blades or cached blades is a difficult procedure (and would be even more confusing terminologically if we had real blades to confuse the issue). Having examined similar bifaces from other contexts, like habitation sites, we want to view "cache blades" as finished tools, but, if they are truly cached blades, they are in a sense, finished, since they appear to have been made for the purpose of deposition, as they were recovered. Perhaps we might also consider such terms as cache scrapers, cache bifaces, cache flakes, cache preforms, cache points etc.

CACHE BLADES

Most uniform in size and shape and most frequent in this assemblage are 10 bifaces that appear to represent the desired end form of the cached bifaces. Although several other variants are also discussed, these examples (Figure 2) are most uniform in their characteristics and may represent "the template" or the closest approximation to the desired form, assuming that there was a perceived future state for "cache blades".

For the most part, these bifaces exhibit complete bifacial flaking, or flake scars over the entire surface of both faces. Only in a few instances are larger areas (as large as 1/3 of one face of the biface) unmodified. Most of these bifaces, as with the other specimens below, exhibit sinuous edges as if they were discontinued before completion and are ready for further reduction at some later time. They are sort of like preforms in that sense but they could not be described as preforms since the specific intended form of the finished product cannot be discerned. Maybe, then, the cache "blades" are actually cache "blanks" to use Collins (1975) terminology. Predominantly ovate-triangular in form, the widest portion of the bifaces is found in their mid-section to lower portion. These 10 examples are complete in all respects and their metrics are presented in Table 1. Figures 3, 4, and 5 illustrate other groupings of items from the site as described below.

The grouping of bifaces illustrated in Figure 3 also appear to be completed "cache blades" that are also bifaces, but these are more variable in their form than seen in the examples above. These specimens undoubtedly represent acceptable extremes in the range of forms of the cached bifaces. While they are all bifaces they tend to be smaller than those above, and items 3g and 3h have been further shaped and thinned or "refined" approaching a thin bifacial form (see also Table 1).

A third grouping of items that undoubtedly also formed a part of this cache include two large (ovate triangular) primary flakes (Figure 4a and 4e), three well thinned unifaces (Figure 4f-h) and six rather crude, small and thick bifacially flaked specimens that appear to have broken during earlier stages of reduction but were still regarded as suitable for the cache. Three examples of the later are illustrated as Figure 4b-d.

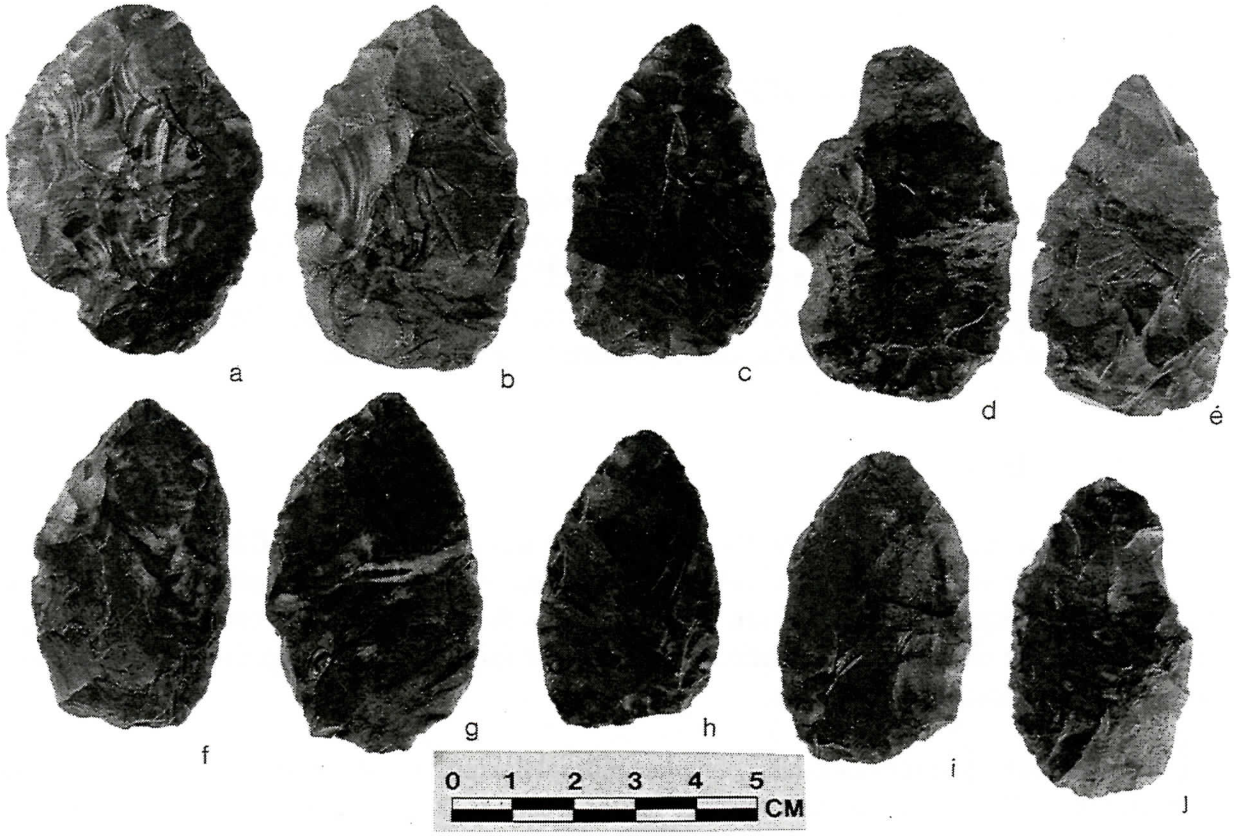

Figure 2.Pilon Site Bifaces/Cache Blades

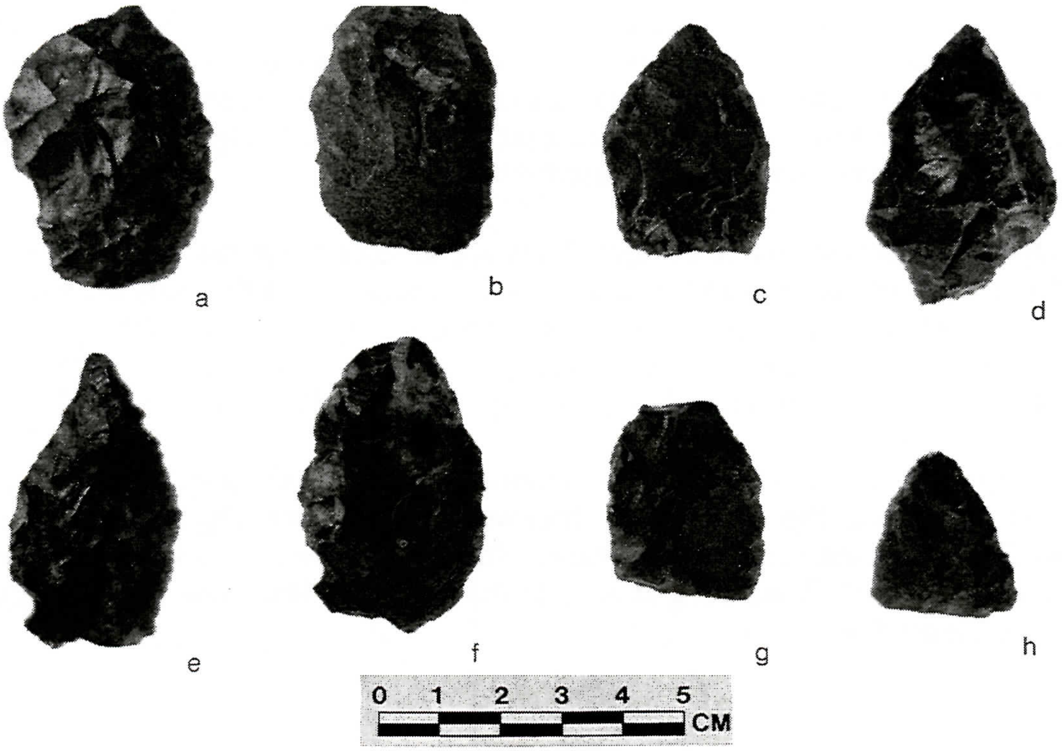

Figure 3. Other Bifaces from the Pilon Site

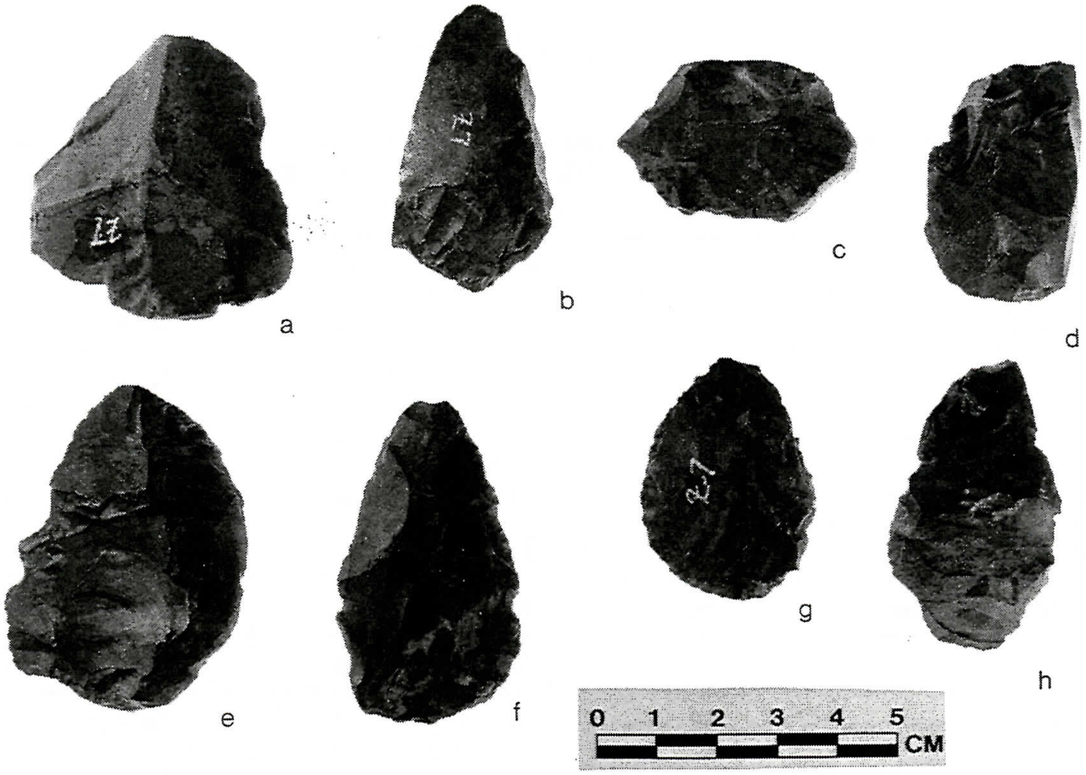

Figure 4. Primary Flakes (a,e); Biface Fragments (b,c,d); and Unifaces (f,g,h)

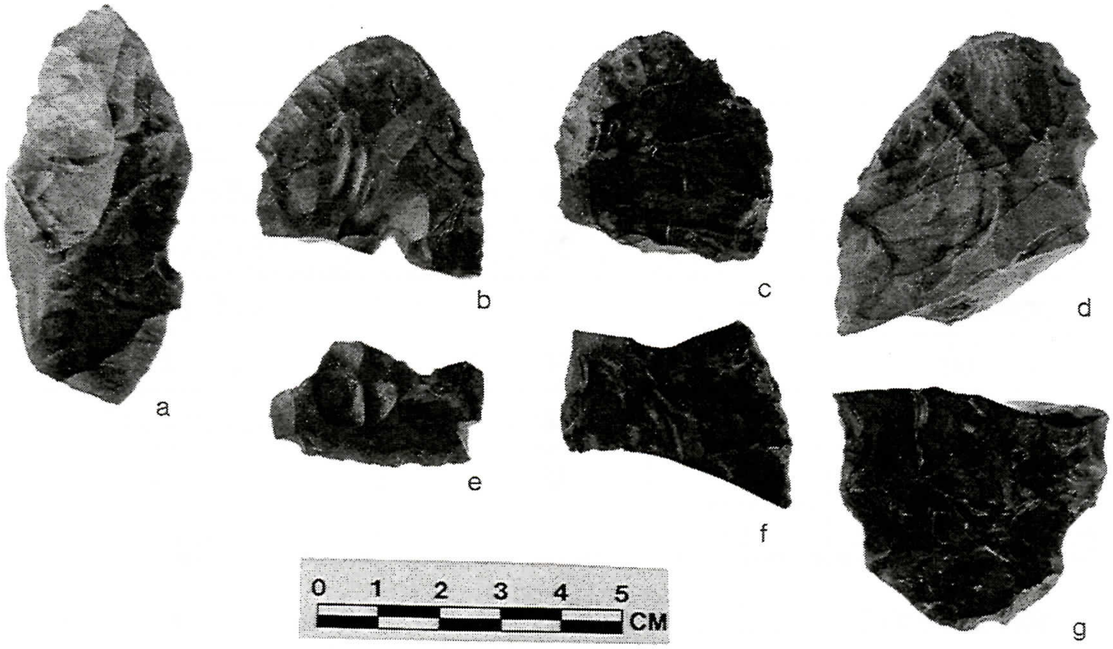

Figure 5. Cache Blade Fragments

Table 1. Pilon Site Cache

Shape	Maximum Length	Maximum Width	Maximum Thickness	Comments	Figure Ref.
Ovate	59	44	8	Biface	2:a
Ovate-Triangular	60	40	8	Biface	2:b
Ovate-Triangular	56	34	7	Biface	2:c
Ovate-Triangular	60	38	8	Biface	2:d
Ovate-Triangular	57	33	8	Biface	2:e
Ovate-Triangular	55	33	8	Biface	2:f
Ovate-Triangular	59	36	7	Biface	2:g
Ovate-Triangular	50	30	8	Biface	2:h
Ovate-Triangular	52	31	7	Biface	2:i
Ovate-Triangular	53	30	7	Biface	2:j
Ovate	48	35	7	Biface	3:a
Ovate-rectangular	42	31	6	Biface	3:b
Pentagonal	39	28	6	Biface	3:c
Stem-like base	48	32	10	Biface (thick)	3:d
Pentagonal	49	28	7	Biface	3:e
Ovate-triangular	49	32	7	Biface	3:f
Triangular	32	26	6	Biface (refined)	3:g
Triangular	27	24	6	Biface (refined)	3:h
Ovate-Triangular	53	31	7	Refined uniface	4:f
Ovate-Triangular	40	30	8	Refined uniface	4:g
Ovate-Triangular	49	28	7	Refined uniface	4:h
Large Triangular Flake	47	45	12	Primary flake	4:a
Large Triangular Flake	54	39	8	Primary flake	4:e

(also recovered are 8 biface fragments, 8 scrapers, 4 points, 29 flakes and a chert core.)

In addition to the bifaces in Table 1, there are another eight fragmented bifaces that may have been broken by ploughing after they were deposited at the site. Seven of these are illustrated in Figure 5. Two of these fragments (Figure 5b, 5e) appear to be from the same biface, being made of similar material and both exhibiting evidence of thermal alteration (pot-lidding), notably absent from all other examples from the site.

SCRAPERS

Eight scrapers are illustrated in Figure 6. Two (Figure 6g-h) are large side scrapers, four (Figure 6a-b,6e-f) are end scrapers (the distal end of "a" is missing so this identification is tentative), and two scrapers (6:c and d) are on thin flakes and might well be classified as random flake scrapers. The bit edges of all scrapers have been utilized.

POINTS

Four projectile points and fragments are included in the Pilon site collection. Two are relatively complete and two are fragments. Three of the four specimens are of a similar Onondaga chert as is found throughout the remainder of the collection and these most likely have the same cultural affinity as the rest of the cache. The complete point of this material (Figure 7a) is 43 mm long, 18 mm in maximum (shoulder) width and 5 mm thick. (Note the significantly different scale of Figure 7). Small, slightly sloping, side notches appear low on the lateral edges. The base is not ground.

Another point base of a similar Onondaga chert is an unnotched triangular point (Figure 7c). It is 19 mm wide and 4 mm in maximum thickness. The remaining point fragment of this material has been thermally "pot-lidded" and is missing both the tip and base but remnants of a slightly barbed shoulder remain. Measuring 17 mm wide and 5 mm in maximum thickness this point fragment exhibits traces of very fine serration of its blade edges (Figure 7b).

The remaining, nearly complete, point (Figure 7d) is of a light grey, grainy chert, likely Ancaster chert. With the tip of this specimen missing it's maximum length can only be approximated at 36 mm from the 29 mm remaining. Maximum (shoulder) width is 22 mm and thickness is 4 mm. Unlike the other complete point, this specimen exhibits a slightly expanding stemmed base but it is finely serrated as is one of the other fragments. While the material type and form of this specimen contrasts with the other points, it's small size, delicate workmanship, thinness and serration argue that it may be contemporaneous with the remainder of the assemblage.

FLAKES

The collection from the Pilon site includes 20 large flakes between 30 and 60 mm in length, another nine smaller flake fragments and a small (51 x 46 x 35 mm) random core of Onondaga chert. The

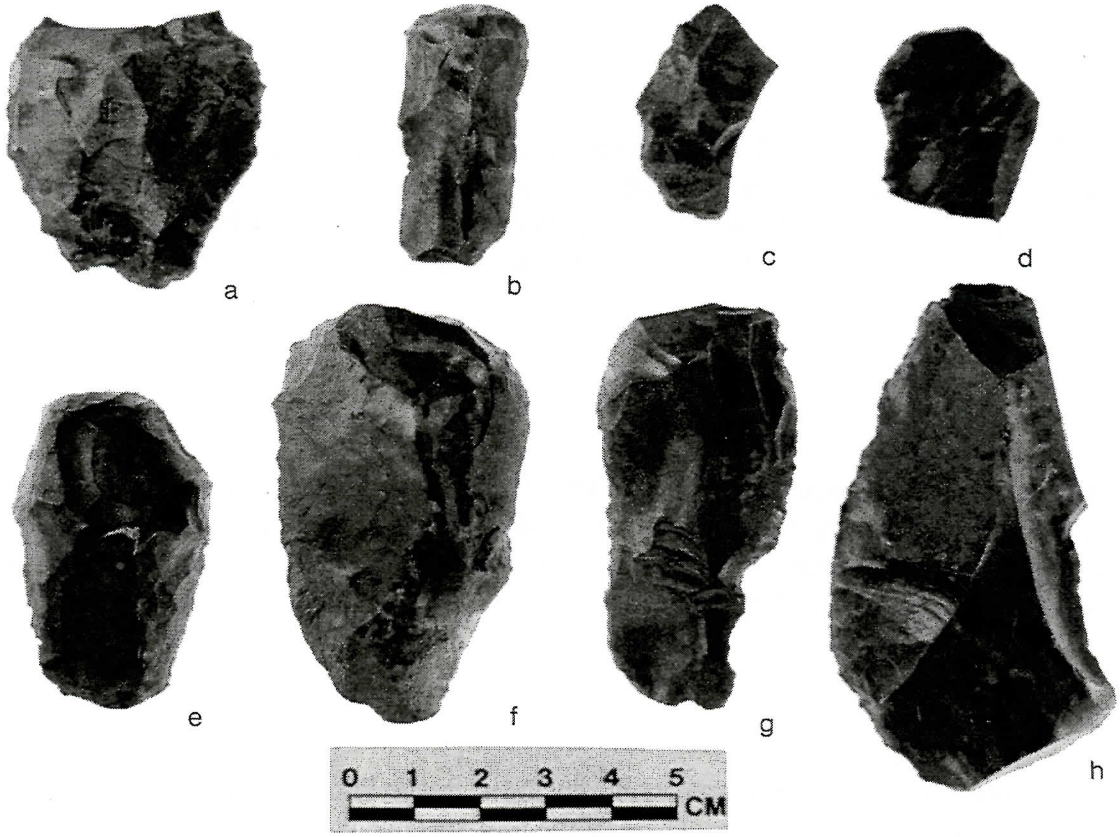

Figure 6. End (a,b,c); Side (g,h) and Random Flake (c,d) Scrapers

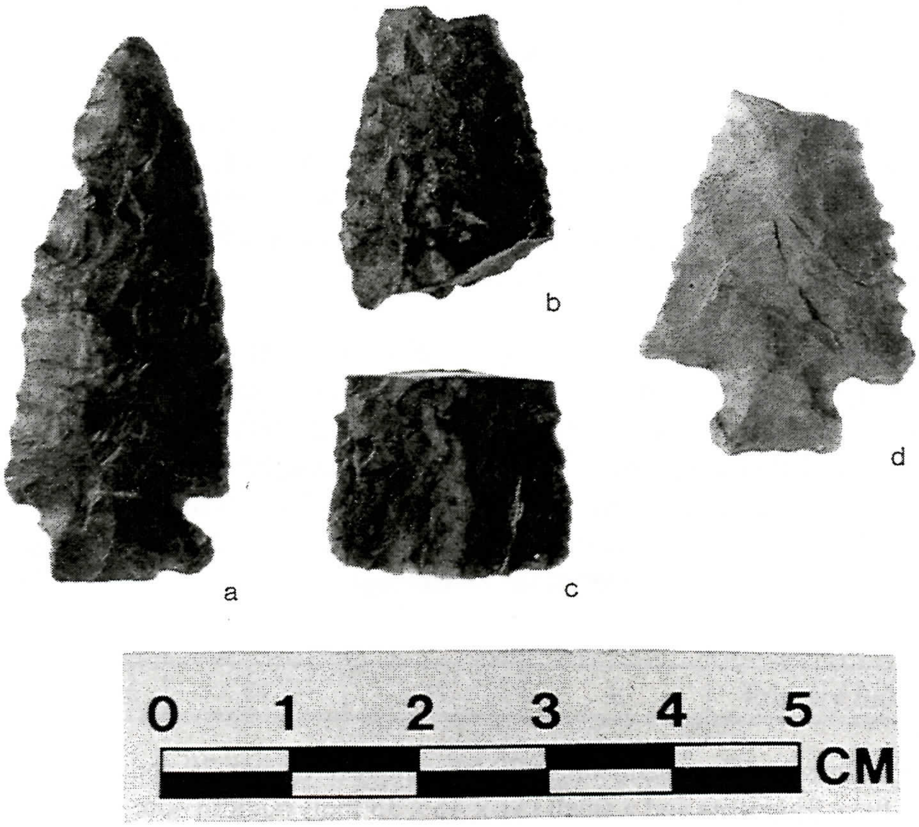

Figure 7. Pilon Site Points and Fragments (note scale)

larger flakes include both primary and secondary flakes that may have been regarded as tool blanks and probably, like the core, constituted a part of the cache. The flake fragments are seen as portions of large flakes and were likely also a part of the cache. Most notable is the absence in the collection, or in the field visit to the site, of smaller flakes that might indicate that the reduction of the materials took place at the site. In their absence it is apparent that the cache was produced elsewhere and brought to the site in pretty much the state in which it was recovered.

DISCUSSION

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, the 403 Highway missed the small Pilon site by about 50 metres and it remains there awaiting highly recommended, detailed investigation. There is enough already to say with some confidence that the complete point from the site is most similar to some of the Late Archaic small point assemblages documented elsewhere in southwestern Ontario, particularly that from Crawford Knoll . The bifaces seem too thick and ovate in form to be those usually attributed to Meadowood, so that an estimated date of about 3000 B.P. for the cache would not be unrealistic (cf. Ellis et al. 1990).

Aside from contributing to our appreciation of Late Archaic caches and perhaps mortuary ceremonialism, the Pilon site speaks authoritatively about some of the terms that have become familiar to the archaeological consulting industry, terms such as "archaeological potential" and "isolated find".

This paper is intended to document the Pilon site and its surface collection so that it will not be missed when the time comes. I am afraid, however, that it will be. The current state of archaeological survey and salvage at the threat of development impact will of course demand an archaeological survey and the site area, if it is regarded as having "archaeological potential", will be ploughed and surveyed by a licenced, perhaps qualified, archaeologist, who may report one or two "isolated finds" and it will be cleared for development purposes. During construction the equipment operator might note a change in soil colour or texture and may even find an "arrowhead". However, based on the Pilon site collection, gathered from the surface of a ploughed field over 30 years, they will likely miss about 200 artifacts that are still in the ploughzone and who knows what else below there.

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A Comment on "Isolated Finds"

Gary Warrick

The most important point about the Pilon site is that one surface collection, in the context of doing a CRM survey, may not be sufficient for determining site significance. At least two or maybe three surface collections would be required to fully appreciate the significance of the Pilon site. The 1990 field visit recovered just one artifact - a scraper. If the lengthy history of Vince Pilon's activities at the site was unknown and this visit represented the only examination of the site, the site would most certainly have been written off by most archaeologists - myself included. Isolated finds in ploughed fields do not normally warrant further investigation. However, the Pilon site acts as a cautionary tale, warning us that if we continue to treat isolated finds as flakes or tools that fell out of someone's deer hide pants pocket, then we may be dismissing some significant sites. I am convinced that significant sites in ploughed fields are being misidentified and lost as a result of present archaeological practices.

The history of artifact recoveries from the Pilon site also suggests that one surface collection does not always provide us with a representative artifact sample. Data from Highway 407W (Burlington, Ontario) has shown that the significance of a ploughed site may not be revealed by a single surface collection. The Ireland II site (AiGw-94) is a heavily plough-damaged Early Iroquoian village, salvage excavated by the London Museum of Archaeology in 1998. Prior to MTO's 1996 surface collection of the site and the recovery of pot sherds and identification of Ireland II as a village site, three earlier surface collections recovered only a handful of flakes and three diagnostic points (two of them pre-Iroquoian) spread over a 3-4 acre field. In 1996, I recommended no further work on the site but Malcolm Horne (MCzCR) insisted that we give it one last surface collection just in case. I am glad that he did. The 1996 collection recovered over 150 artifacts, including several pieces of Iroquoian pottery. In the 1989 Archaeological Master Plan for the Town of Vaughan, Dana Poulton cites another example of an Iroquoian village site in the Pickering cluster that upon discovery was represented by a single piece of debitage. Subsequent surface collections defined it as a village site. There are most certainly many more stories out there of unrecognized site significance based on the first (or even second or third) surface collection (Lennox [1982] represents an early lesson in this regard).

The fly in the ointment is this: how do we know for certain that we are missing significant sites after only one surface collection? Developers (and some consultants) would consider it a total waste of money, time and effort to conduct multiple collections of artifact findspots or test excavation of them. However, if we do not investigate isolated finds further than just their discovery, we must realize that now and then very significant sites will be lost. At the very least, the surface collection of ploughed fields for CRM purposes should give any isolated find a second chance.

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1998 Treasurer's Report for the London Chapter, Ontario Archaeological Society

	Expenditures	**Revenues**	**Totals**
Bank Balance as of January 1st 1998			8738.89
Bank Balance as of December 31st 1998			8740.75
Memberships, T-shirts, Back Issues		1794.47	
Memberships (U.S.A.)		165.89	
Publication Sales		2271.00	
Publication Sales (U.S.A.)		261.64	
CD - ROM Sales (through Adams Heritage Consultants		264.00	
Total Revenues		***4757.00***	***4757.00***
Myers Road Report Printing	2311.62		
KEWA Printing	1087.27		
Postage	789.16		
Book Purchases - "Legacy in Stone" by ASI	179.44		
Supplies (Envelopes, Labels, etc.,)	149.27		
Past President Gift	94.09		
Rent of Meeting Space at the London Museum	75.00		
Bank Charges (new cheques)	15.29		
Main body Membership Transfer	29.00		
Speaker - Dinners	25.00		
Total Expenditures	4755.14		4755.14
Bank Balance as of January 1st 1998			87388.89
Revenues for 1998			4757.00
			13495.89
Expenditures for 1998			4755.14
Book Balance as of Dec 31st 1998			8740.75
Bank Balance as of Dec 31st 1998			8740.75
Profit for 1998			1.86